



**Testimony to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement
Committee
Public Hearing on March 2, 2021**

**HB 6517 - AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE TO
ANALYZE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LAWS GOVERNING DYSLEXIA INSTRUCTION AND
TRAINING.**

Good morning Senator Haskell, Representative Elliott, Senator Witkos, Representative Haines, and other members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments to this committee regarding HB 6517 - AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE TO ANALYZE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LAWS GOVERNING DYSLEXIA INSTRUCTION AND TRAINING.

My name is Dr. Stephen Hegedus, I am the Dean of the College of Education for Southern Connecticut State University, the current President of the Connecticut Chapter of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE-CT), a group of 12 CT public and private universities and colleges with Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs).

On behalf of the AACTE-CT, I want to state the CT Chapter of the AACTE and its alliance of Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) is always seeking ways to improve our programs, including how best to educate and support our teacher candidates in the instruction and improved outcomes for students with dyslexia. However, we do have several concerns with this bill which are outlined below.

In Section 1(a)(2) - This section would mandate the Department of Education to verify that educator preparation programs comply with requirement for including supervised practicum hours and instruction in the detection and recognition of, and evidenced-based structured literacy interventions for, students with dyslexia in programs of study in the diagnosis and remediation of reading and language arts as set forth in subsection (i) of section 10-145d of the general statutes. Please note that not all undergraduate students, especially undergraduate elementary education candidates, have the opportunity to work with dyslexic students in their student teaching placements.

In Section 1(b) – This section would mandate the Department of Education to adopt the compliance measures set forth in 19 appendix d of the final report of the task force established pursuant to special act 19-8 for the purpose of assessing whether each educator preparation program provides educators with instruction (1) in the recognition of dyslexia, in the detection of dyslexia, in the provision of evidence-based structured literacy interventions for students with dyslexia, and (4) for a program of

study in the diagnosis and remediation of reading and language arts, through supervised practicum hours. While we all agree that additional knowledge of reading and writing instruction is beneficial for our candidates, we need to look at this legislation in the context of an already highly regulated undergraduate education program. Our elementary education students need to fulfill all the basic university coursework, and an additional major before they begin their education credits. Additionally, they must be able to complete their degree within 120 credits, the same amount as all other students. This leaves them with almost no electives and room for just two to three reading courses. If this law passes, we may be able to fulfill the letter of the law, but to fulfill the spirit of the law students will need additional coursework to learn and practice the competencies outlined in the bill. We all want the same outcomes, but perhaps a better way to achieve them is to work together in a trusting environment to arrive at an agreement that can be fully operationalized.

One of our concerns is with the proposed special education certification changes and its implications. EPPs meet these changes in graduate reading and graduate special education LD programs, however, it is difficult for special education undergraduates who are required to learn about every disability, to demonstrate all these competencies within the same 120-credit limit. The graduate programs are where they can concentrate on learning disabilities/dyslexia.

We also have concerns in section 6 of the bill. It imposes requirements and restrictions on who universities can hire as practicum supervisors which would limit the number of qualified people to serve in these roles thereby creating more hurdles to enter the profession. Also, it should be noted that at certain colleges, the instructors and supervisors currently meet and/or exceed the proposed requirements in this bill. At SCSU, for example, the instructors teaching in higher education have advanced degrees in special education and backgrounds in teaching reading to struggling students, including those with SLD in reading. Faculty who serve on state committees addressing literacy and/or dyslexia, are national leaders in structured literacy, and conduct research in structured literacy. For these reasons, we believe that the qualifications of university supervisors should continue under the purview of the EPPs.

Again, I want to state that while we are very concerned about this bill, we appreciate the efforts of the task force. I want to reiterate the EPPs are continuously working hard to improve our programs, including how best to educate and support our teacher candidates in the instruction and improved outcomes for students with dyslexia.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide comments on this bill and feel free to reach out to me.

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